

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SSC-01 IO-14 DRC-01 /116 W

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R 121506Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8626

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UK

SUBJECT: THE ARITHMETIC OF THE NEW PARLIAMENT

1. SUMMARY: THIS MESSAGE IS INTENDED AS A ROUGH THUMB-NAIL GUIDE TO THE LINE-UP OF VOTING "BLOCS" IN THE NEW PARLIAMENT, AND TO HOW THEY ARE LIKELY TO COMBINE ON VARIOUS ISSUES. END SUMMARY

2. PARLIAMENT OPENS TODAY (MARCH 12). SELWYN LLOYD HAS BEEN RE-ELECTED SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE. THE LABOR PARTY AND THE CONSERVATIVES WILL EACH PROVIDE ONE MP TO SERVE AS HIS DEPUTIES. (THE POSITION OF THIRD DEPUTY WILL REMAIN VACANT FOR THE TIME BEING.) SINCE THE SPEAKER AND HIS DEPUTIES ARE NOT ENTITLED TO VOTE, THE

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VOTING LINE-UP IN THE NEW PARLIAMENT WILL BE AS FOLLOWS:

LABOR - 300, CONSERVATIVES - 295, LIBERALS - 14, UNITED
ULSTER UNIONISTS - 11, SCOTTISH NATIONALISTS - 7, WELSH
NATIONALISTS - 2, SDLP - 1, INDEPENDENT LABOR - 1,
DEMOCRATIC LABOR - 1. THE SDLP MP (FITT) AND THE
INDEPENDENT LABOR MP (MILNE) HAVE INDICATED THEY WILL
VOTE WITH LABOR. THE POLICY VIEWS OF THE DEMOCRATIC
LABOR MP (TAVERNE) ARE SCARCELY DISTINGUISHABLE FROM
THOSE OF THE LIBERALS. THE VOTING "BLOCS," THEN, WILL
BE ROUGHLY AS FOLLOWS: LABOR - 302, CONSERVATIVES - 295,
LIBERAL - 15, UUU - 11, AND NATIONALISTS - 9.

3. ON THE ISSUES TO WHICH LABOR IS LIKELY TO ASSIGN
THE MOST URGENT PRIORITY IN THE NEW PARLIAMENT, I.E.,
REPEAL OF THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT, REPEAL OF THE
HOUSING FINANCE ACT, AND AN INCREASE IN PENSIONS, IT
CAN PROBABLY COUNT ON THE SUPPORT OF THE LIBERALS AND
THE NATIONALISTS -- ALTHOUGH THERE WILL ALWAYS BE SOME
UNCERTAINTY CONCERNING THE READINESS OF NATIONALIST MPS
TO SHOW UP IN WESTMINSTER TO VOTE ON ISSUES NOT DIRECTLY
RELATED TO SCOTTISH OR WELSH INTERESTS. NATIONALISTS
MAY ALSO PROVE UNCOOPERATIVE IF THE NEW GOVERNMENT MAKES
NO MOVE TOWARDS MEETING THEIR DEMANDS FOR INCREASED
SCOTTISH AND WELSH SELF-GOVERNMENT.

4. ON THE QUESTION OF AN INCOMES POLICY, IT REMAINS TO
BE SEEN HOW SUCCESSFUL THE LABOR GOVERNMENT WILL BE IN
PERSUADING TRADE UNIONS TO MODERATE THEIR WAGE DEMANDS.
CONSERVATIVES AND LIBERALS ARE DUBIOUS THAT A VOLUNTARY
POLICY WILL WORK, AND MAY PRESS FOR THE RE-IMPOSITION
OF STATUTORY RESTRAINTS IF INFLATION CONTINUES UNABATED.

5. NATIONALIZATION PROPOSALS ARE A MAJOR COMPONENT OF
LABOR'S ELECTION MANIFESTO. CONSERVATIVES, LIBERALS,
AND UUU WOULD ALL OPPOSE ANY BUT THE MOST INNOCUOUS
EXTENSIONS OF PUBLIC OWNERSHIP. SINCE THEIR COMBINED
VOTES COULD BRING DOWN THE GOVERNMENT, IT IS UNLIKELY

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THAT LABOR WOULD PUSH FOR EXTENSIVE NATIONALIZATION
UNLESS AND UNTIL IT FELT READY TO SEEK A STRENGTHENED
MANDATE FROM THE ELECTORATE.

6. THE QUESTION OF HOW PARLIAMENT MIGHT VOTE ON BASIC
QUESTIONS RELATING TO BRITAIN'S EC MEMBERSHIP IS PERHAPS
THE MOST COMPLICATED OF ALL. CONSERVATIVES (EXCEPT
PERHAPS FOR A FEW POWELLITES), AND LIBERALS WOULD OPPOSE
ANY MOVE LEADING TOWARDS WITHDRAWAL FROM THE EC;
NATIONALIST AND UUU MPS WOULD FAVOR WITHDRAWAL. THE
KEY UNCERTAINTY IS WHETHER THE PRO-MARKETEERS IN THE
PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY (ESTIMATED TO NUMBER ABOUT 75)
WOULD DEFY PARTY DISCIPLINE AS THEY DID IN OCTOBER 1971,
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ESPECIALLY AS THIS WOULD ENTAIL BRINGING DOWN A LABOR
GOVERNMENT. MUCH WILL DEPEND, OBVIOUSLY, ON HOW THE
NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE EC PROCEED, WHAT THEIR RESULT IS,
AND PRECISELY HOW THE ISSUE IS FINALLY PUT TO PARLIAMENT.

7. COMMENT: OVERSHADOWING AND CONDITIONING THE VARIOUS
POSSIBLE VOTING COMBINATIONS ON THESE AND OTHER ISSUES
WILL BE THE EARNEST DESIRE OF ALL PARTIES TO AVOID
ANOTHER GENERAL ELECTION SOON, THE EQUALLY EARNEST
INTEREST OF EACH PARTY IN SEEING THAT ELECTION TAKE
PLACE AT A MOMENT OF MAXIMUM ADVANTAGE TO ITSELF, AND

THE REALIZATION BY ALL CONCERNED THAT THEY ARE ALREADY
INTO THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE ELECTION REGARDLESS OF WHEN
IT COMES.

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